

# Return to Use Initiative

## 2006 Demonstration Project

### Tar Lake: Mancelona, Michigan

**THE SITE:** The 200-acre Tar Lake site is approximately one mile south of Mancelona Township in Antrim County, Michigan. Between 1910 and 1944, the Antrim Iron Works Company discharged tar waste into a four-acre depression at the site. The depression, referred to as Tar Lake, is the source area of contamination for the 200-acre site. In 1998, EPA began a time-critical response action, which included excavating and transporting tar wastes from the depression, installing a poly-liner, and backfilling the depression with clean soil. The long-term cleanup activities at the site included removing remaining contaminated materials and installing an on-site biosparge system that enhances the natural breakdown of hazardous materials. The cleanup activities were completed on September 28, 2004. The ground water is currently being monitored by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to ensure the remedy remains protective. Ground water use is restricted until the contamination decreases to acceptable levels; according to projections based on monitoring data, this is likely to occur by 2007.

**THE OPPORTUNITY:** The area is unzoned, is close to downtown Mancelona, and provides significant opportunity for recreational, commercial, and residential uses to address multiple community needs. The site is currently not in use and is surrounded by low-density residential and light industrial properties. The future use of the Tar Lake site will take place as part of the community's consideration of a larger area, referred to as the Mancelona Community Redevelopment Area.

**THE BARRIERS:** A restrictive covenant originally implemented prohibited use of the site for all non-industrial purposes, but it soon became clear that industrial use was not a reasonable future use for the site. Stigma affects public perception of the site, especially the 40-acre uncontaminated area included within site boundaries. Reuse is also hampered by confusion about what future uses are likely to take place over what areas of the site.

**THE SOLUTION:** The Tar Lake site was one of ten Superfund Redevelopment cooperative agreements entered into in 1999 to provide local communities with the opportunity to consider the reasonably anticipated future land use of sites. In 2005, in an ongoing effort to continue supporting communities interested in the protective future use of sites, Region 5 provided additional assistance in the form



#### Barriers:

Restrictive covenant preventing the likely future use of the site; stigma affecting both contaminated and uncontaminated parcels within the site's boundary

#### Solution:

Update restrictive covenant to allow for appropriate uses; issue a Ready for Reuse (RfR) Determination to address stigma



#### Before:

Cleaned up former industrial site with beautiful views next to commercial and residential areas

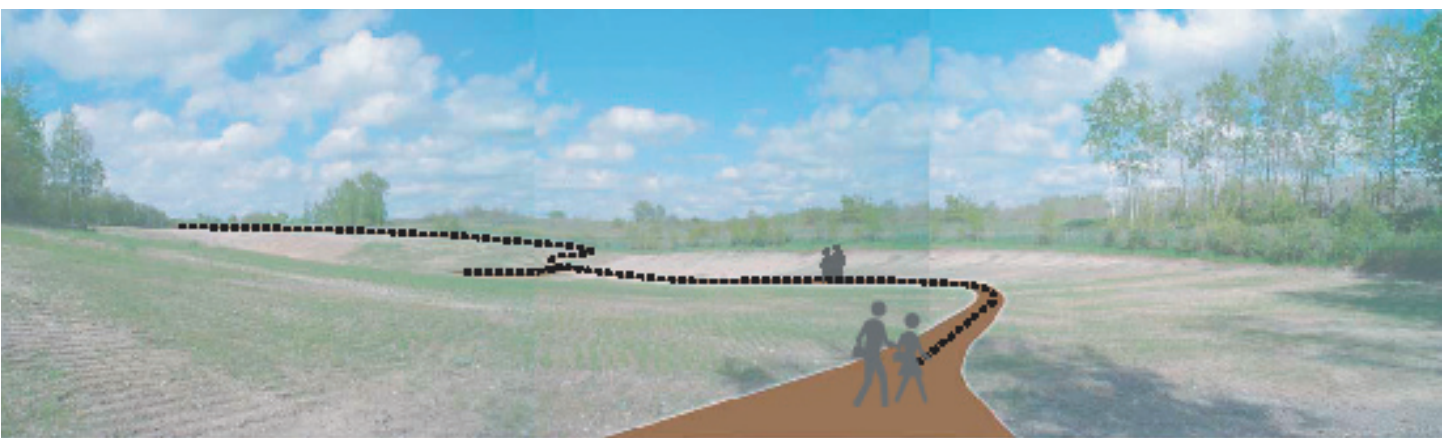
#### After:

Future mixed use development complete with recreational opportunities and commercial development

of in-kind services to explore and update the initial plan developed under the 1999 cooperative agreement. This assistance is helping to determine whether the remedy is protective of the future use envisioned by the stakeholders. The current reuse plan includes residential housing in the eastern portion of the site (mostly the uncontaminated area), recreational uses such as open space and trails in the western and southern portion of the site, and a commercial district along the western border. With a community-based redevelopment vision in mind, EPA, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and Community Resource Development Inc. of Mancelona, Michigan (current owner of the majority of the site) worked together to update the restrictive covenant to allow uses for which the remedy is protective. The new restrictive covenants and an environmental protection easement will allow for non-residential uses with specific restrictions on ground water use and types of construction activities. On November 21, 2005 EPA deleted the 40-acre uncontaminated area from National Priorities List (NPL) to lessen the stigma associated with the area. In a further attempt to combat stigma, EPA is writing a Ready for Reuse (RfR) Determination for the site. The RfR Determination is an environmental status report that will provide potential users of a site with clear information about the status of a site, including the limitations and restrictions associated with the site. This information will help the potential users to decide whether a proposed reuse is appropriate.

**THE SITE NOW:** The Redevelopment Plan will give stakeholders a clear reuse vision for the site, the new restrictive covenants and environmental protection easement have been drafted and will soon be implemented, and stigma will lessen due to the RfR Determination and deletion of the uncontaminated area. With these barriers being addressed, the redevelopment of the site has begun and will continue to move forward. A developer is already interested in constructing log homes on the deleted, uncontaminated area; however, the new restrictive covenants allowing for non-industrial use have not yet been implemented. EPA is now working to survey the deleted area so the developer and property owners will know what part of the site allows for unrestricted use. The survey is expected to be finished in 2007.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:** Tom Bloom, Region 5 Superfund Redevelopment Coordinator, at (312) 886-1967 or [bloom.thomas@epa.gov](mailto:bloom.thomas@epa.gov).



*The proposed recreational opportunity (e.g., trails) across Tar Lake depression. The background shows the current topology and vegetation cover at the Tar Lake depression, overlaid with a hypothetical trail. This is one of the visions formed through the community-based planning process at the Tar Lake site. The community-based planning process has been an important factor in the redevelopment of the site.*